

because the gunners would not know where to drop their shells amid that noncommittal belt of beauty. At best the hostile fleets would have to pit only chance gunnery against the deadly mathematical precision with which those embowered batteries would be hurling their unceasing destruction against them exposed in plain view on the open surface of the ocean,—impossible odds for even the combined navies of the world to contend against, even though their guns outnumbered those in the Reservation a hundred to one.

Such, at least, was the plan and theory of things. To the Commandant was given the full control and guardianship of this great defense, to keep it inviolate.

He knew that, were not its secret kept, an expert attacker, with plans of the emplacements of the batteries before him, could stand off with his fleets half a dozen miles at sea and seriously cripple the works with a hundred well placed shells, hush them with a hundred more, and reduce them to demolition with a hundred more.

To aid him in the guardianship of his great secret the law of the land and the sea was clear and precise. It simply said that no one, under pain of arrest, could approach nearer to the Reservation than the patroled line of buoys on the water and the sentried boundaries on the land.

These precautions, this great amount of money, were all aimed to protect the harbor of the greatest city in the nation, to capture which would inevitably be the first aim of an enemy, as it would place him in a position of inestimable strategic value; and therefore the Reservation was looked upon as the keystone of the nation's defenses.

BUT the Commandant carried these great responsibilities easily, and as he sat there on the veranda with his guest his mind was at peace with the world. Finally he broke the silence with a chuckle.

"Do you remember that odd brute you introduced at the club the other night, Commodore?" he said. "It was the night you were called away by your son's sickness, and left your taciturn guest to our tender mercies."

"Oh, yes, I was thinking about him yesterday," the Commodore replied. "I have not seen him since. He's a queer dog. How did he make out with you all?"

"He made out to get me into a bet for a thousand dollars with him—not so bad making out, hey?" the Commandant said.

"Not nearly so bad—and just like him too. What was the bet?"

"The maddest bet you ever heard,—nothing less than that within two weeks from that night the plans of the Reservation would be at the disposal of whatever nation might need them to force better treaty concessions out of us," the Commandant said.

"Typical of him from the ground up!" exclaimed the Commodore. "Although I must admit it is a bit startling, especially from him. I wonder what he is up to now?"

"So do I. Is he reliable?—I mean as to paying the bet; for of course he is bound to lose. What do you know about him, anyway?" asked the Commandant.

"His word is as good as gold on the bet," replied the Commodore. "I'd give my personal surety for that."

"But what do you think his idea was? Does he like to adopt that way of throwing away his money? I feel ashamed to take his money; but he nettled me at the time, and I thought I'd teach him a lesson."

"You don't need to waste any sympathy over him. It was a sporting proposition with him—there was something on his mind that made him think it was worth a bet."

"He must be insane: no such idea could enter a sane man's mind. Who is he, what are his associations or sources of knowledge, that could have led him to form such an idea? If there is anything even remotely rational in it, it is my duty to run it down."

"Oh, I haven't the slightest notion what his source of ideas in this particular instance may be," the Commodore replied; "but as a general proposition he has unusual opportunities to form ideas and opinions of his own. He has been King's courier, intriguer extraordinary to diplomats and potentates, and Lord knows what on a grand scale. There may have come to him some bit of international gossip of some plans some nation or other has to send spies to this country. There would be nothing new in that, you know, as they are always doing that; but it may have been some new plan that he thought made it worth his while to take a bet on."

"Well, there is no chance of his winning, as I could not draw my lines any tighter than they are; but if he really had some information, and thought he was taking a sporting chance—why, I shall not hesitate to cash his check when the bet expires," said the Commandant.

"Do so by all means," the Commodore said. "He would be grossly insulted if you did not. Lord knows what part of the world he is in now; but he won't forget the bet. You will hear from him again about it, no matter what way the cat jumps."

THE next night the Commandant sat alone on his veranda. It was just another such night, with the same great beautiful moon in the skies, the same balmy peace in the air, and in his own mind there was the same contentment.

As he sat there an orderly brought him a special delivery packet addressed to him personally, sent by registered mail. He signed for it, and stepped into his library to open it by the light.

The next minute he was staring with clenched fists and choking breath at a map which, he recognized at a glance, was an accurate diagram of the northern half of the Reservation lying on the hills behind his residence.

After the first shock he gathered himself together to study it, to see whether his first impression was true; and the longer he studied it the more he realized with a sickening sensation of disaster that it was indeed a deadly accurate military diagram of the salient features of the Reservation, with the emplacements of its batteries carefully plotted in reference to the topographical landmarks of the coast and shore. It was obviously the work of a trained military observer.

If there had been any doubt in his mind that in some mysterious way this map was connected with his bet with the stranger, there was written in a rolling hand across the top of it the suggestive line, "Duplicate map for the consideration of the Commandant."

Still unwilling to believe, he studied it again carefully. He did not marvel at the accuracy of the to-

how, he could not imagine; but by some mysterious means whose accuracy was as baffling as its mysteriousness.

He felt a frantic helplessness as to what to do. At first he thought of summoning his officers about him; but decided to wait, to take time to fight the question out by himself. He stepped out into the cool air of the veranda. The great moon swung high in the heavens; but he had no mind for its beauty tonight. He stared at it, conscious only of the ugly reality that had come to him.

AS his gaze rested on the disk of brilliance, suddenly across it swept an unexpected apparition which at once took concrete and definite form in his startled vision, its details sharply silhouetted against the great plate of light. It was an aeroplane. Every stay and strut and rod of its structure was clear cut—the Commandant even fancied that he could make out the pilot's profile against the moon.

With the sight of it came the immediate realization of the significance of that fateful flaw on the face of the moon which went through his mind like a poignant electric shock. The mystery of the map was answered. The details of the Reservation, masked from eyes on the level of the earth, would be completely patent to eyes looking down upon them from aloft, lighted and revealed by the moon's radiance.

The dazed bewilderment that had followed his first study of the map gave way now to frantic activity. He called an orderly, and sent summons for all his officers, and at the same time set orders afoot that would soon put the whole garrison on the alert, and awaken that peacefully drowsing night with a pulsing sense of alarm.

Yet what was there to do? He had hardly finished giving his orders before that question shaped itself in his thoughts. With every officer, every man, every device on the Reservation, in readiness and on the alert, even then what was there to be done? Half of the great secret was already out, and what could be done to save what was left? He left that question unanswered, and stood staring at the aeroplane.

It hovered to and fro in the light of the moon. He stood watching it grimly through his powerful night glasses. Subconsciously he was aware of the low hum of activity that was welling up through the night in response to his commands,—the shuffling of feet; and from varying distances the militant notes of the bugles calling "To arms!" sounding through the still night.

He was aware that his staff was gathering about him. But to all these results he was oblivious. His whole attention was fixed on that great vulture in the moonlight. It was veritably a vulture, hovering above the body of his lifework. As he watched it he saw there was coldly premeditated method in its flight; it was not some chance passerby of the skies. It wheeled and swooped back and forth across the Reservation, at times hovering in narrow circles as if making a close scrutiny of the place beneath. Sometimes it seemed almost as if about to land, scarcely seeming to have enough headway to maintain its lift; then it would pick up and away again.

The Commandant noted with muttered imprecations the places where these studious hoverings took place,—invariably they were over some emplacement of the garden-masked guns, or magazines, or arsenals, or other great details in the plans. He knew that these things, flooded as they were by the light of the moon, massive in character, could easily be observed and plotted in his sketches by the man looking down upon them from above, almost as easily as under broad daylight, and certainly to as good military purpose, since locality and not detail was the point to be gained.

As he stood there watching, raging helplessly within himself, the great vision of supreme military efficiency that only an hour before had been so clear in his mind's eye rapidly dissolved into a chaos of doubt and futility. With its essential bulwark of secrecy violated, the Reservation, with all its many million dollars' worth of the highest enginery of war, was falling and crumbling, in effect, into a vast military nonentity before his eyes,—all its massive strength of steel and deep-rooted concrete foundations becoming a vast field of scrap iron and crippled structures, worthless for the purposes either of war or of peace, beneath the cold scrutiny of that man in his fragile support of rods and wires and cloth planes.

THE Commandant's staff had gathered about him. Without words they had fully understood the significance of his call as they followed the direction of his fascinated gaze. For some minutes they all stood silently watching, watching the aeroplane through their night glasses.

"That fellow must be arrested immediately!" ejaculated a young Lieutenant, unable to restrain his feelings any longer.

The Commandant turned and looked at him curiously. "I order you to make the arrest, Lieutenant Kane," he said with quiet sarcasm.

The Lieutenant subsided, and silence came to the group again.

There were in that group leading experts in all



"The next minute the Commandant was staring at it with horror."

pography in the map: he knew that might easily have been obtained from surveys and maps of the coast made before the Reservation had been closed to the public, and since that closure the contour of the shore line and of the hills had not been changed. It was evident that such a map had been used as the groundwork for the present diagram. But the part that amazed him was the deadly accuracy with which the important military details had been sketched in, indicating batteries with the number of guns in each, single guns, magazines; in fact, all the data that an attacking fleet would need to bombard the place, in the northern half of the Reservation.

With a feeling of heartsick despair he turned away, realizing that the great secret was broken, that the Reservation had been shorn of its greatest strength,—